APPEAL TO THE AMERICAN CONSCIENCE

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I APPEAL TO YOU, citizens of America, as a person concerned with liberty and social justice. Many of you will feel that your country has served these ideals and, indeed, the United States possesses a revolutionary tradition which, in its origins, was true to the struggle for human liberty and for social equality. It is this tradition which has been traduced by the few who rule the United States today. Many of you may not be fully aware of the extent to which your country is controlled by industrialists who depend for their power partly upon great economic holdings in all parts of the world.

The United States today controls over sixty per cent of the world's natural resources, although it contains only six per cent of the world's population. The minerals and produce of vast areas of the planet are possessed by a handful of men. I ask you to consider the words of your own leaders, who sometimes reveal the exploitation they have practiced. The *New York Times* of 12th February 1950 said:

Indo-China is a prize worth a large gamble. In the north are exportable tin, tungsten, manganese, coal, lumber and rice; rubber, tea, pepper and hides. Even before World War II Indo-China yielded dividends estimated at 300 million dollars per year.

One year later, an adviser to the United States State Department said the following:

We have only partially exploited Southeast Asia's resources. Nevertheless, Southeast Asia supplied 90 per cent of the world's crude rubber, 60 per cent of its tin and 80 per cent of its copra and coconut oil. It has sizeable quantities of sugar, tea, coffee, tobacco, sisal, fruits, spices, natural resins and gums, petroleum, iron ore and bauxite.

And in 1953, while the French were still in Vietnam fighting with American backing, President Eisenhower stated:

Now let us assume we lost Indo-China. If Indo-China goes, the tin and tungsten we so greatly value would cease coming. We are after the cheapest way to prevent the occurrence of something terrible – the loss of our ability to get what we want from the riches of the Indo-Chinese territory and from Southeast Asia.

This makes clear that the war in Vietnam is a war like that waged by the Germans in Eastern Europe. It is a war designed to protect the continued control over the wealth of the region by American capitalists. When we consider that the fantastic sums of money spent on armament are awarded in contracts to the industries on whose boards of directors sit the generals who demand the weapons, we can see that the military and large industry have formed an interlocking alliance for their own profit.

The truth is that the Vietnamese popular resistance is just like the American revolutionary resistance to the British, who controlled the economic and political life of the American colonies in the eighteenth century.

Vietnamese resistance is like the resistance of the French Maquis, the Yugoslav partisans and the guerrillas of Norway and Denmark to the Nazi occupation. That is why a small peasant people is able to hold down a vast army of the most powerful industrial nation on earth.

I appeal to you to consider what has been done to the people of Vietnam by the United States Government. Can you, in your hearts, justify the use of poison chemicals and gas, the saturation bombing of the entire country with jelly-gasoline and phosphorus? Although the American Press lies about this, the documentary evidence concerning the nature of these gases and chemicals is overwhelming. They are poisonous and they are fatal. Napalm and phosphorus burn until the victim is reduced to a bubbling mass. The United States has also used weapons like the lazy dog, which is a bomb containing ten thousand slivers of razor-sharp steel. These razor darts slice to ribbons the villagers upon whom these weapons of sheer evil are constantly used. In one province of North Vietnam, the most densely populated, one hundred million slivers of razor-sharp steel have fallen in a period of thirteen months.

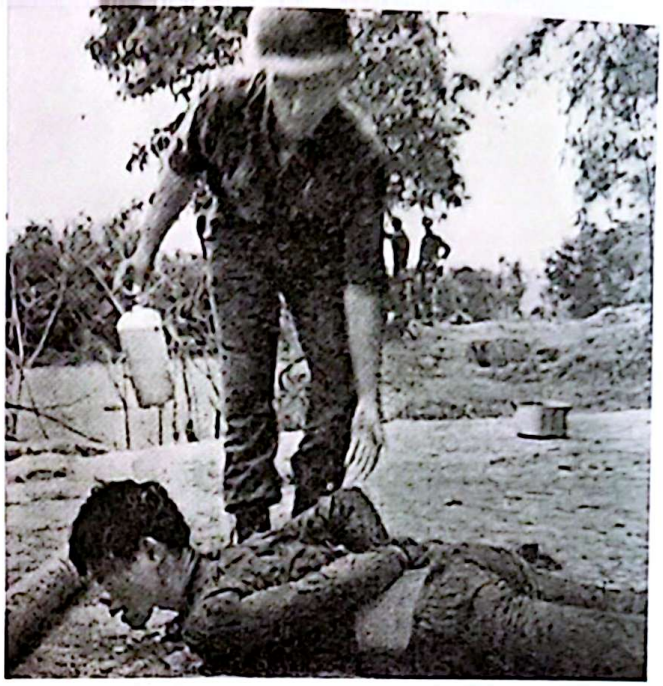
It is even more revealing and terrible that more Vietnamese died during the reign of Diem from 1954 to 1960, than since 1960, when the Vietnamese partisans took up armed resistance to the American occupation in the South. What the papers have called the 'Vietcong' is, in fact, a broad alliance, like the popular fronts of Europe, including all political views ranging from Catholics to Communists. The National Liberation Front has the most ardent support of the people and only the wilfully blind will fail to see this. Do you know that eight million Vietnamese were placed in internment camps under conditions of forced labour, with barbed wire and armed patrols? Do you know that this was done on the direction of the United States Government

He kicked a small spool of wire out of the doorway and made room.

"We just rode Nuongs, you can tell that by the wire here," he said.

"Why?" he was asked. Nuongs are Chinese mercenaries from Formosa....

"They always want the wire for the prisoners", the kid said. "Don't you know that? They get a VC and make him hold his hands against his cheeks. Then they take this wire and run it right through the one hand and right through his cheek and into his mouth. Then they pull the wire out through the other cheek and stick it through the other hand. They knot both ends around sticks. You never seen them prisoners like that? Oh, you ought to see how quiet them gooks sit in a helicopter when we got them wrapped up like that." (New York *Herald Tribune,* September 29, 1965.)



and that torture and brutal murder were a continuous feature of life in these camps? Are you aware that the gases and chemicals which have been used for five years in Vietnam blind, paralyse, asphyxiate, cause convulsions and result in unbearable death? Try to imagine what it would mean if an enemy were bombing the United States and occupied it for twelve years. How would you feel if a foreign power had saturated New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, St. Louis, San Francisco and Miami with jelly-gasoline, phosphorus and lazy dogs? What would you do if an occupying army used these toxic gases and chemicals in every town and hamlet they entered? Can you really think that the American people would welcome so savage an aggressor? The fact is that everywhere in the world people have come to see the men who control the United States Government as brutal bullies, acting in their own economic interests and exterminating any people foolhardy enough to struggle against this naked exploitation and aggression.

When the United States began its war against the Vietnamese, after having paid for all of the French war against the same people, the U.S. Defence Department owned property valued at one hundred and sixty billion dollars. This value has since doubled. The U.S. Defence Department is the world's largest organisation, owning thirty-two million acres in the United States and millions more in foreign countries. By now, more than 75 cents out of every 100 are spent on present wars and preparation for future war. Billions of dollars are placed in the pockets of the U.S. military, thereby giving the Pentagon economic power affecting every facet of American life.

Military assets in the United States are three times as great as the combined assets of U.S. Steel, Metropolitan Life Insurance, American Telephone and Telegraph, General Motors and Standard Oil. The Defence Department employs three times the number of people working in all these great world corporations. The billions of dollars in military contracts are provided by the Pentagon and fulfilled by large industry. By 1960, twenty-one billion dollars were spent on military goods.

Of this colossal sum, seven and one-half billion were divided amongst ten corporations and five corporations received nearly one billion dollars each. I ask you to consider carefully that in the executive offices of these same corporations there are 1,400 army officers, including 261 generals and officers of flag rank. General Dynamics has 187 officers, 27 generals and admirals and the former Secretary of the Army on its payroll.

This is a ruling caste, which stays in power no matter who is elected to nominal public office, and every President finds himself obliged to serve the interests of this all-powerful group. Thus, American democracy has been emptied of life and meaning because the people cannot remove the real men who rule them.

It is this concentration of power which makes it necessary for the Pentagon and big industry to continue the arms race for its own sake. The sub-contracts they award to smaller industries and war contractors involve every American city and, thus, affect the jobs of millions of people. Four million work for the Defence Department. Its payroll is twelve billion dollars, twice that of the U.S. automobile industry. A further four million work directly in arms industries. In many cities military production accounts for as much as 80 per cent of all manufacturing jobs. Over 50 per cent of the national public expenditure of the United States is devoted to military spending. This vast military system covers the world with over three thousand military bases, for the simple purpose of protecting the same empire which was described so clearly in the statements of President Eisenhower, the State Department adviser and the *New York Times* which I mentioned earlier to you. From Vietnam to the Dominican Republic, from the Middle East to the Congo, the economic interests of a few big corporations linked to the arms industry and the military itself determine what happens to American lives. It is on their orders that the United States invades and oppresses starving and helpless people.

Yet, despite the immense wealth of the United States, despite the fact that with only six per cent of the world's people approaching two-thirds of the world's resources are in its possession, despite the control over the world's oil, cobalt, tungsten, iron ore, rubber and other vital resources, despite the vast billions of profits that are gained by a few American corporations at the cost of mass starvation amongst the peoples of the world, despite all this, sixty-six million Americans live at poverty level. The cities of America are covered in slums. The poor carry the burden of taxation and the fighting of colonial and aggressive wars. I am asking all of you to make an intellectual connection between events which occur daily around you, to try to see clearly the system which has taken control of the

United States and perverted its institutional life into a grotesque arsenal for a world empire. It is the vast military machine, the great industrial combines and their intelligence agencies which are regarded by the people of three whole continents as their main enemy in life and the source of their misery and hunger. If we examine the governments which depend for their existence upon American military force, we shall always find regimes which support the rich, the landlords and the big capitalists. This is true in Brazil, in Peru, in Venezuela, in Thailand, in South Korea, in Japan. It is true the world over.

The result of this is that in order to suppress a national revolution, such as the great historic uprising of the Vietnamese people, the United States is obliged to behave as the Japanese behaved in Southeast Asia and the Nazis behaved in Eastern Europe. This is literally true. The concentration camps to which I have referred, and which held nearly sixty per cent of the rural population of South Vietnam, were scenes of torture, massacre and mass burial. The special experimental weapons, like the gas and chemicals and jelly-gasoline, are as horrible as anything used by the Nazis during the Second World War. It is true that the Nazis systematically exterminated the Jews and the United States has not yet done anything comparable in Vietnam. With the exception of the extermination of the Jews, however, everything that the Germans did in Eastern Europe has been repeated by the United States in Vietnam on a scale which is larger and with an efficiency which is more terrible and more complete.

In violation of solemn international agreements signed by American Presidents and ratified by the American Congress, this Johnson Government has committed war crimes, crimes against humanity and crimes against the peace. It has committed these crimes because the Johnson Government exists to preserve the economic exploitation and the military domination of subject peoples by U.S. industrial magnates and their military arm. The Central Intelligence Agency, which has a budget fifteen times larger than all the diplomatic activity of the United States, is involved in the assassination of heads of state, and plots against independent governments. This sinister activity is designed to destroy the leadership and the organisation of peoples who are struggling to free themselves from the stranglehold of American economic and political domination.

As the Communists withdrew from Quangngai last Monday, US jet bombers pounded the hills into which they were headed. Many Vietnamese—one estimate was as high as 500— were killed by the strikes. The American contention is that they were Vietcong soldiers. But three out of four patients seeking treatment in a Vietnamese hospital afterwards for burns from napalm or jellied gasoline were village women. (New York *Times,* June 6, 1965.)

There is a new breed of Americans that most of us don't know about and it is time we got used to it. The 18 and 19-year-olds, fashionably referred to as high school drop-outs, have steel in their backbones and maybe too much of what prize fighters call the killer instinct. These kids seem to enjoy killing Vietcong. . . . (New York *Journal-American,* September 16, 1965.)

United States' militarism is inseparable from that same predatory capitalism which reduced the American people themselves to poverty within the living memory of this generation. The same essential motives have led to barbarous and atrocious crimes on a great scale in Vietnam.

I have called on intellectuals and eminent independent men and women from all parts of the world to join in an international War Crimes Tribunal which will hear evidence concerning the crimes of the U.S. Government in Vietnam. You will remember that Germans were considered guilty if they acquiesced in and accepted the crimes of their government. Nobody considered it a sufficient excuse for Germans to say that they knew about the gas chambers and the concentration camps, the torture and the mutilation, but were unable to stop it. I appeal to you as a human being to human beings.

Remember your humanity and your own self-respect.

The war against the people of Vietnam is barbaric. It is an aggressive war of conquest. During the American War of Independence, no one had to tell Americans the purpose of their struggle or conscript them against their will. Nor was it necessary for American soldiers to go ten thousand miles to another country. In the American revolutionary war against foreign troops Americans fought in fields and forests although they were in rags and the occupying army was the strongest of the day. Americans fought the occupier, although they were hungry and poor, and they fought them house by house. In that war of liberation, the American revolutionaries were called terrorists and the colonial power was the one labelling them rebels and rabble.

American national heroes responded with words such as Nathan Hale's and Patrick Henry's. The sentiment, 'Give me liberty or give me death', inspired their struggle, just as it inspires the Vietnamese resistance to United States' aggression and occupation. The Nathan Hales and Patrick Henrys of Vietnam are not the United States army. Those who display heroism, love of country and that deep belief in freedom and justice which inspired the American people in 1776 are today the people of Vietnam, fighting under the revolutionary leadership of their National Liberation Front. And so the American people are to be used as cannon-fodder by those who exploit not only the Vietnamese but the people of the United States themselves. It is Americans who have been killing Vietnamese, attacking villages,

However, several villagers were rounded up and one man was brought before the company commander. The Vietnamese officer briefly questioned the suspect, then turned to his adviser . . . and said, "I think I shoot this man. Okay?"

"Go ahead," said the adviser.

The officer fired a carbine round point-blank, striking the villager below the chest. The man slumped and died. The patrol moved on. Later, a correspondent asked the adviser, who had seemed a decent enough fellow, why he had given his approval.

. . . "These people could have moved to a Government area. In this war they are either on our side or they are not. There is no in-between"

(New York *Times* Magazine, November 28, 1965.)

occupying cities, using gas and chemicals, bombing their schools and hospitals — all this to protect the profits of American capitalism. The men who conscript the soldiers are the same men who sign the military contracts in their own benefit. They are the same men who send American soldiers to Vietnam as company cops, protecting stolen property.

So it is that the real struggle for freedom and democracy is inside the United States itself, against the usurpers of American society. I have no doubt that the American people would respond just as the Vietnamese have responded if the United States were invaded and subjected to the atrocities and tortures which the United States army and government have inflicted on the Vietnamese. The American protest movement, which has inspired people all over the world, is the only true spokesman for American concern for individual liberty and social justice. The battlefront for freedom is in Washington, in the struggle against the war criminals – Johnson, Rusk and McNamara – who have degraded the United States and its citizens. Indeed, they have stolen the United States from its people and made the name of a great country stink in the nostrils of people the world over. This is the harsh truth, and it is a truth which is affecting the daily lives of Americans irrevocably and increasingly. There is no looking the other way. There is no pretending that the war crimes are not occurring, that the gas and chemicals do not exist, that the torture and napalm have not been used, that the Vietnamese have not been slaughtered by American soldiers and American bombs. There is no dignity without the courage to examine this evil and oppose it.

There is no solution for the American crisis short of the emancipation of the American people themselves from these barbarous men who speak in their name and defile a great people by doing so. The American people, however, are becoming alert and are showing that same determination and courage which the Vietnamese have so movingly displayed. The Negro struggle in Harlem, Watts and the American South, the resistance of the American students, the increasing distaste for this war shown by the American people at large, give hope to all mankind that the day when greedy and brutal men can deceive and abuse the American nation is drawing to a close.

My appeal to Americans is made with full awareness that the rulers of the United States have spared no device in propaganda to hide from the American people the ugly face of their rulers and the truth about their behaviour. Abraham Lincoln gave expression to the hope that a people, once aroused, can be deceived no longer. All Americans who know from their own experience and from that of their closest relatives what has been done in Vietnam should come forward now.

Speak the truth and take your stand alongside your brothers throughout the world. Struggle for an America free of murderous production, free of war criminals, free of exploitation and free of the hatred of subject peoples. These peoples look to the ordinary people of the United States to understand their plight and to answer their struggle with an American resistance capable of making the United States again a citadel of individual liberty and social justice. The international War Crimes Tribunal is itself an appeal to the conscience of the American people, our allies in a common cause.

The War Crimes Tribunal is under urgent preparation now. I am approaching eminent jurists, literary figures and men of public affairs in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the United States itself. Vietnamese victims of this war will give evidence. Full scientific data concerning the chemicals used, their properties and their effects will be documented. Eye-witnesses will describe what they have seen and scientists will be invited to examine the exhibits in the possession of the Tribunal. The proceedings will be tape-recorded and the full evidence will be published. There will be documentary film material concerning the witnesses and their evidence.

We aim to provide the most exhaustive portrayal of what has happened to the people of Vietnam. We intend that the peoples of the world shall be aroused as never before, the better to prevent the repetition of this tragedy elsewhere. Just as in the case of Spain, Vietnam is a barbarous rehearsal. It is our intention that neither the bona fides nor the authenticity of this Tribunal will be susceptible to challenge from those who have so much to hide. President Johnson, Dean Rusk, Robert McNamara, Henry Cabot Lodge, General Westmoreland and their fellow criminals will be brought before a wider justice than they recognise and a more profound condemnation than they are equipped to understand.

POST SCRIPT: THE CONSCIENCE OF MANKIND

My Appeal to the American Conscience poses to the American people the relation of war crimes in Vietnam to their Government, society – to their very lives. Not only the American people are confronted by these events. So are we all. World opinion and world action must halt these vast atrocities, or 'Eichmann' will come to stand for Everyman. 'We', said Eichmann, 'only provided the lorries'. 'He who witnesses a crime in silence, commits it', said Jose Marti.

Eichmann symbolises damaged humanity: those who do not know; those who will not think; those who cannot care. Marti expressed the quick, unfettered sense of human responsibility, of impatience with excuses for horror and of contempt for moral evasion.

Who, among us, is not a witness to these crimes?

There can be few literate adults in the Western world unfamiliar with the war in Vietnam waged by the United States Government. The mass media of communication, notably television and news magazines, have displayed unremittingly the most graphic evidence of atrocities carried out by American forces and those responsible to them in Vietnam.

Photographs showing mutilation and torture of villagers and National Liberation Front prisoners have appeared on the front pages of the *New York Times, New York Herald Tribune,* the *Washington Post* and innumerable other newspapers and journals. *Newsweek, Time, Life* and *Look* magazines have carried large numbers of photographs of American forces engaged in operations in Vietnam with phosphorus, poison gas, chemicals and napalm. Such captions as, 'Smoking out the Vietcong: phosphorus more deadly than gas', have accompanied pictures in these journals.

The bombardment of hospitals, schools and tuberculosis sanatoria has been recorded unselfconsciously. The mere compilation of the photographs, reports and data from the Western Press affords a list of crimes as terrible as many of the acts for which Germans were executed at Nuremberg.

Chief Prosecutor Justice Jackson of the United States Supreme Court said in his opening statement at the Nuremberg trials:

'The real complaining party at the bar is civilisation. Civilisation is asking whether law is so laggard as to be utterly helpless to deal with crimes of such magnitude as Germany's . . . Civilisation expects this Tribunal to put the forces of international law, its precepts, its prohibitions and most of its sanctions on the side of peace.'

The precedent of Nuremberg has direct relevance to our present situation. This was again articulated by Justice Jackson:

'Certainly no future lawyer or nation undertaking to prosecute crimes against the peace of the world will have to face the argument that the effort is unprecedented and, therefore, by inference, improper.'

In holding a War Crimes Tribunal in 1967 we maintain that our situation is analogous to the circumstances which made necessary the Nuremberg trials. We feel as people felt 25 years ago when Jews were being crammed into gas chambers. We are compelled to speak out, indeed to cry out, against crimes committed in Vietnam.

We maintain that there is overwhelming evidence of a prima facie character, evidence shown daily by the very media of communication of the Western countries. This evidence supporting the charge of war crimes has induced us to prepare the international Tribunal which will function as a commission of enquiry.

What, then, is the nature of this Tribunal? Witnesses who are under accusation are free to attend, but will not be compelled. It has no power to sentence the accused or carry out penalties. It is not the spokesman of any government. These facts rule out an adversary procedure because without the ability to bring the accused to give evidence in their defence a trial is impossible. A mock trial would not serve the needs of the Tribunal, for its procedures would be inadequate to its purpose. The War Crimes Tribunal will, therefore, be more an international commission of enquiry which, as in the case of a grand jury, has prima facie evidence sufficient to investigate the crimes it believes to have been committed.

The weight and impact of the Tribunal will be a result of the eminence and representative character of its members. They will be men who are unimpeachable and whom no-one could accuse of treating evidence inadequately or unfairly.

This point is emphasised because there will be some who will say that those who believe crimes to have been committed cannot judge the evidence impartially. This is to confuse an open mind for an empty one. We are not blank slates with no feelings or impressions. The Tribunal is called into being because of a passionate conviction that terrible atrocities and crimes against humanity are taking place at this moment against a small people.

The Tribunal, like the grand jury which brings an indictment, will weigh evidence fairly but will hear that evidence because of its belief that crimes are being committed.

There will be the most precise examination of the characteristics, properties and effects of the chemicals, gas and other weapons used in Vietnam. More than two hundred witnesses and victims will come to testify from Vietnam. Scientists who have studied

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weaponry will give evidence. Doctors, nurses, newspapermen and witnesses will testify. Motion picture film and still photographs of the raids and the victims will be presented for the Tribunal's consideration.

Documentary film will be made from the testimony of the witnesses, the proceedings of the Tribunal and the evidence. Tape recordings will be made of the hearings and pressed into gramophone records for wide distribution. Full data and testimony will be published.

The mere announcement of the Tribunal has led to the most widespread international interest and support.

Spontaneous actions in favour of the Tribunal have taken place in many countries. Petitions calling on people everywhere to support the Tribunal are being circulated prior to the hearings. Committees of support are being formed in many countries. Teach-ins, debates and meetings concerning the War Crimes Tribunal are being organised. Funds are being collected.

Badges and stickers are being distributed. By such means as these it is becoming clear that a considerable mandate is being produced for the Tribunal proceedings.

These proceedings will last twelve weeks and will take place in Paris.

The initiative in forming the international War Crimes Tribunal is that of the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation. We have sought to invite esteemed and accomplished people who have made a special contribution to human civilisation. Several of them are experts in international law, with particular knowledge and experience concerning war crimes. These latter include Professor (Dr. Juris) Vladimir Dedijer of Yugoslavia and Lelio Basso, international lawyer and Editor of *International Socialist Journal.*

Other members include: Gunther Anders, the Austrian writer; Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre from France; former President Lazaro Cardenas of Mexico; Stokely Carmichael, National Chairman of the Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee in the United States; Professor Josue de Castro of Brazil, former head of the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation; Isaac Deutscher, the British historian; Danilo Dolci from Sicily; and Peter Weiss, the Swedish playwright. It should be clear that the Tribunal is geographically representative as well as prominent.

Because of the eminence of the Tribunal members, not all of them can be in Paris for twelve weeks. The legal staff of the Tribunal will take depositions from witnesses and present findings to Tribunal members wherever they are. At the conclusion of the hearings the judgement of the Tribunal will be printed. Support for this judgement will be solicited on the most intensive and world-wide scale.

There are those who raise the question of violence on the part of the National Liberation Front and the Vietnamese resistance to the United States. The War Crimes Tribunal would no more think of considering as crimes the Vietnamese resistance to American aggression than did the Nuremberg Tribunal treat the rising of the Warsaw Ghetto, the struggle for survival of the partisans of Yugoslavia, the resistance of Norway, the underground in Denmark and the Maquis in France as worthy of condemnation. It was the Gestapo who were condemned and not their victims. That assessment was central to the Nuremberg trials themselves and so it is with respect to the War Crimes Tribunal and Vietnam.

Although it is impossible to compel defence witnesses to appear, the Tribunal is prepared to hear witnesses for the defence, but only those who have been formally requested by the United States Government to appear on its behalf. Unauthorised witnesses cannot be accepted in defence of the United States' actions because they would inevitably be considered inadequate or unfair by the United States Government, which would insist on regarding the matter of its defence to be its own concern. The serious and solemn character of the Tribunal proceedings require that Government approved defence only will be permitted where the United States is concerned. For these reasons, I have written President Johnson requesting him to appear in his own defence or designate persons to come on his Government's behalf.

The international War Crimes Tribunal views its responsibilities to be to civilisation and to mankind. Chief Prosecutor Justice Jackson of the United States Supreme Court had said at Nuremberg:

'If certain acts and violation of treaties are crimes, they are crimes whether the United States does them or whether Germany does them. We are not prepared to lay down a rule of criminal conduct against others which we would not be willing to have invoked against us.'

This Tribunal was called in the conviction that these crimes have again been committed and that judgement must again be invoked against those responsible.

It is important to note that the Nuremberg Tribunal was conducted by victorious nations against a defeated one.

The International War Crimes Tribunal has no victor's powers, nor any State authority. It holds a brief for the decent feelings of people everywhere.

The international investigating committee which is being completed will travel throughout Vietnam, gathering evidence. People of all countries: Help the War Crimes Tribunal. Make it a Tribunal of the conscience of mankind.

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